

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SAA-01 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-12 HA-05
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R 261422Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8909
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4226

.O. GDS
TAGS: MARR, UN, LE, IS
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR LEONARD'S VISIT TO SOUTH LEBANON: TOUR
OF UNIFIL AREA OF OPERATIONS

REF: BEIRUT 4212

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN TOUR OF UNIFIL AREA OF OPERATIONS,
US DEPUTY PERMREP LEONARD AND PARTY LEARNED THE FOLLOWING:
NORWEGIAN BATTALION COMMANDER SAID ABOUT TWENTY PALESTINIAN
FIGHTERS WERE CAMPED ABOUT 300 YARDS FROM NORWEGIAN POSI-
TIONS. HE ALSO NOTED THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA HAD HELD SIX
NORWEGIAN SOLDIERS FOR ABOUT FOUR HOURS ON JULY 21. THE
IRANIAN BATTALION COMMANDER SAID HIS TROOPS HAD ENCOUNTERED
FEW PROBLEMS. A SENEGALESE COMMANDER SAID SOME PALESTINIAN
FIGHTERS HAD RECENTLY RETURNED TO THE TYRE POCKET, PERHPAS
FROM THE BEIRUT AREA. A FIJI DETACHMENT WAS RUNNING A ROAD-
BLOCK WITH APPARENT EFFICIENCY. COMMENT: ON THE WHOLE,

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UNIFIL SEEMED TO BE DOING ITS JOB WITH PROFESSIONALISM,
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH SOLDIERS TO CONTROL THE ENTIRE
AREA OF OPERATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AS INDICATED REFTTEL UN DEPUTY PERMREP LEONARD, VISITING
DEPARTMENT OFFICER NAT HOWELL AND EMBOFF TOURED UNIFIL'S
AREA OF OPERATIONS BY HELICOPTER JULY 24. THEY VISITED

NORWEGIAN BATTALION HEADQUARTERS AT IBL AS SAQI, NORWEGIAN BATTALION POSITION AT HABBARIYAH, IRANIAN POSITION WEST OF DAYR MIMAS, A SENEGALESE POSITION NEAR DAYR QANUN AN NAHR, A FIJI CHECKPOINT AT 'AYN BA'L, A FRENCH POSITION AT SHIHIN. AT IBL AS SAQI LEONARD PARTY LUNCHEDED WITH NORWEGIAN BATTALION COMMANDER, WHO SAID THE FOLLOWING.

A. DURING JUNE THE NORWEGIAN BATTALION HAD BEEN UNDER FIRE FOR 16 OUT OF 30 DAYS. FIRING HAD COME FROM BOTH PALESTINIANS AND CHRISTIANS, WITH LATTER DOING MOST OF IT. IN ADDITION, THE IDF HAD FIRED DIRECTLY ON NORWEGIANS FROM LEBANON. (THE NORWEGIANS DID NOT EXPLAIN THE LATTER INCIDENTS MORE FULLY, BUT SAID THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT IT WAS IDF THAT HAD DONE THE SHOOTING.) DESPITE THIS, THE NORWEGIANS HAD SO FAR SUFFERED ONLY ONE CASUALTY AS A RESULT OF HOSTILE FIRE.

B. BATTALION COMMANDER SAID SO FAR IN JULY THERE HAD BEEN ONLY ONE SERIOUS INCIDENT. (COMMENT. LATER IN THE DAY ON JULY 22 AND ON JULY 23, HOWEVER, THERE WERE AT LEAST TWO INCIDENTS OF FIRING AT UNIFIL SOLDIERS, INCLUDING ONE NORWEGIAN PATROL. END COMMENT). ON JULY 21 ABOUT SIX PEOPLE IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES DROVE THROUGH A NORWEGIAN CHECKPOINT AT THE ENTRANCE TO IBL AS SAQI, WHERE THEY WERE SEARCHED AND FOUND TO HAVE NO WEAPONS. ONCE IN THE TOWN, HOWEVER, THEY THREW ROCKS AT A STORE AND FIRED FOUR OR FIVE SHOTS. THE NORWEGIANS
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DETAINED THESE PEOPLE WHEN THEY TRIED TO LEAVE THE TOWN. SA'AD HADDAD THEN ADVANCED TOWARDS IBL AS SAQI FROM MARJAYUN WITH APC'S AND TANKS AND CAPTURED SIX NORWEGIAN SOLDIERS. HADDAD ALSO THREATENED TO TAKE IBL AS SAQI FROM THE NORWEGIANS. AFTER NEGOTIATIONS, EACH SIDE RELEASED ITS CAPTIVES AFTER ABOUT FOUR HOURS, AND THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN WITHDREW.

C. THE SAME DAY ONE OF HADDAD'S APC'S RAN OVER A MINE ON JULY 21 KILLING TWO PEOPLE. THE NORWEGIANS REMARKED THAT THIS WAS IRONIC, SINCE THEY HAD TRIED TO CLEAR THIS PARTICULAR FIELD BUT HAD BEEN PREVENTED BY CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN FROM DOING SO. (SEVERAL UN OFFICERS COMMENTED THAT MINES WERE ENORMOUS PROBLEM THROUGHOUT SOUTH LEBANON, SOME OF THEM DATING FROM WORLD WAR II. ONE FRENCH ENGINEERING PLATOON HAD ALONE CLEARED 5,000 MINES SINCE UNIFIL'S ARRIVAL.)

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3. AFTER IBL AS SAQI, LEONARD PARTY WENT TO THE NORWEGIAN
OUTPOST AT HIBBARIYAH, WHICH HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN MOST OF
BATTALION'S ARMED CLASHES. THE COMPANY COMMANDER THERE SAID:

A. THERE HAD BEEN NO SERIOUS INCIDENTS THIS MONTH. ON
JULY 11, HOWEVER, THE NORWEGIANS HAD DISCOVERED TWO ROCKETS
RIGGED AS MINES NEAR THEIR POSITION.

B. ABOUT 20 PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS WERE IN CAMP ABOUT 300
METERS TO THE NORTH OF THE NORWEGIAN POSITION. (LEONARD
PARTY COULD CLEARLY OBSERVE SOME OF THE FIGHTERS THROUGH
BINOCULARS.) THIS GROUP WAS BROKEN DOWN INTO TWO SUBGROUPS,
ONE OF WHICH WAS REJECTIONIST AND ONE NOT. THE TWO GROUPS
DID NOT GET ALONG, AND THE NORWEGIANS HAD RECENTLY FOUND A
SERIOUSLY WOUNDED REJECTIONIST OFFICER, WHO HAD APPARENTLY
BEEN WOUNDED IN FIGHTING BETWEEN THE TWO SUBGROUPS.

C. THE NORWEGIANS AND THE PALESTINIANS HAD WORKED OUT
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DETAILED RULES WHICH ALLOWED THE PALESTINIANS TO BE RESUPPLIED
WITH FOOD AND WATER AND NON-MILITARY SUPPLIES FROM HASBAYA
TWICE A DAY. THE PALESTINIANS WERE NOT ALLOWED TO INCREASE
THEIR NUMBER, HOWEVER, OR TO ROTATE IN FRESH MEN FOR THE

REPLACEMENT OF THE PEOPLE ALREADY THERE. WHEN NEW MEN WERE DETECTED TRYING TO MOVE IN, THE NORWEGIANS TURNED THEM BACK.

D. THE NORWEGIANS HAD OBSERVED ON THEIR ANTI-PERSONNEL RADAR THAT DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS THE PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN ACTIVELY PATROLLING SOUTH TOWARDS CHRISTIAN MILITIA AND IDF POSITIONS. THE COMPANY COMMANDER THOUGHT THIS MIGHT AUGUR CLASHES WITH CHRISTIANS OR ISRAELIS.

4. AFTER LEAVING THE NORWEGIAN OUTPOST, LEONARD PARTY VISITED THE IRANIAN AND SENEGALESE POSITIONS. THE IRANIAN BATTALION COMMANDER SAID HIS TROOPS HAD ENCOUNTERED FEW PROBLEMS. A SENEGALESE COMPANY COMMANDER REMARKED THAT SOME PALESTINIANS IN THE TYRE AREA HAD LEFT ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO, APPARENTLY IN THE NORTH AS A RESULT OF THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT. THEY HAD RECENTLY RETURNED TO THE TYRE POCKET, HOWEVER.

5. THE FIJI CONTINGENT RUNNING AT AYN BA'L WAS MANNING A ROADBLOCK WITH APPARENT EFFECIENCY. THE FIJI SOLDIERS WERE STOPPING ALL CARS, CHECKING ID CARDS, AND SEARCHING VEHICLES. TWO LEBANESE GENDARMES WERE STANDING THERE DOING LITTLE. THE FIJI BATTALION COMMANDER SAID THAT HIS MEN CONDUCTED BODY SEARCHES OF SUSPICIOUS MEN BUT NOT WOMEN, AND THAT HE HAD ALLOWED WOMEN DOUBTLESSLY CARRYING ARMS TO PASS, BECAUSE HE COULD NOT SEARCH THEM.

6. THE BATTALION COMMANDER SAID THAT THE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE WAS TO TURN BACK ARMED PALESTINIANS, BUT THAT IN FACT HIS MEN ALSO TURNED BACK UNARMED PALESTINIANS WHEN THEY
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WERE KNOWN TO BE PLO FIGHTERS. HE SAID THAT HIS MEN ASKED THE OCCUPANTS OF VEHICLES IF THEY HAD ANY WEAPONS. IF THE OCCUPANTS ADMITTED THEY DID, THE FIJI SOLDIERS MERELY KEPT THE WEAPONS UNTIL THEIR OWNERS RETURNED ON THE WAY OUT. IF THE SOLDIERS FOUND UNDECLARED WEAPONS, HOWEVER, THEY CONFISCATED THEM PERMANENTLY.

7. AT SHIHIN THE FRENCH BATTALION COMMANDER SAID THAT HIS UNITS HAD OBSERVED AND CONTAINED 150 PALESTINIANS SOUTH OF THE ROAD NEAR JWAYYA. HE SAID THAT THE FRENCH PERIODICALLY CAUGHT THE PALESTINIANS TRYING TO REINFORCE THIS POSITION, BUT STOPPED THEM FROM DOING SO.

8. EMBOFF OBSERVED RATHER EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO HOUSING IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHICH UN OFFICER SAID HAD BEEN CAUSED BY ISRAELIS. DAMAGE IN RASHAYYA AL FUKHAR WAS HEAVY. ONE UN OFFICER SAID THAT NUMBER OF HOUSES COMPLETELY FLATTENED HAD BEEN DESTROYED BY ISRAELIS WHO BELIEVED THEY HARBORED FEDAYEEN OR SYMPATHIZERS. VILLAGE OF YARIN WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY

DESERTED, THIS OFFICER SAID.

9. COMMENT: BASED ON AN ADMITTEDLY SUPERFICIAL IMPRESSION, UNIFIL CONTINGENTS SEEMED TO BE DOING THEIR JOBS PROFESSIONALLY AND WITH DEDICATION, ALTHOUGH UNIFIL DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH SOLDIERS TO PATROL ADEQUATELY ITS ENTIRE AREA OF OPERATIONS. AS HAD HEADQUARTERS STAFF (SEE REFTEL), THE UNIT COMMANDERS STRESSED THE NEED FOR PRE-FABRICATED HOUSING, SINCE MANY TROOPS ARE LIVING IN LIGHT TENTS IN AREA WHERE THERE ARE HEAVY RAINS AND STORMS IN WINTER. EMBASSY AGAIN ENDORSES THE NEED FOR SUCH HOUSING. END COMMENT. PARKER

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